

House Approves Moran Bill to Increase Rural Veterans Access to Health Care

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives this week approved legislation introduced by Congressman Jerry Moran to provide more health care opportunities for veterans living in rural areas. Moran's bill, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act, would enable rural veterans enrolled in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health system to receive care locally rather than traveling long distances to VA facilities. Many Kansas veterans living in rural parts of the state will be part of the demonstration project authorized by this legislation.

"Despite our best efforts, the reality is that some veterans live in remote areas beyond the VA's ability to construct medical facilities to care for them," Moran said. "Too often, the distance means rural veterans are foregoing the trip to the VA. This legislation will provide these underserved veterans the choice to receive care closer to home at a local hospital or physician's office rather than traveling hours to VA facilities. This common sense reform will finally provide rural veterans the care they have earned."

H.R. 1527, the Rural Veterans' Access to Care Act, would establish a three year pilot program in several rural regions of the country to allow the most underserved rural veterans to take advantage of existing rural health providers, such as local hospitals, community health centers and rural health clinics. To qualify, a veteran must live at least 60 miles from a VA primary care facility like an outpatient clinic, 120 miles from a VA hospital or 240 miles from a VA specialized care facility when seeking that care.

"I am very pleased with the passage of this important bill as it will demonstrate the improved care and possible collaborations between providers already caring for veterans in our communities and the veterans health care system," Dr. Bob Moser, member of the VA Rural Health Advisory Committee, of Tribune said. "It also says thanks to the many thousands of rural veterans who faithfully served their country. It will help by removing some of the hardships and improve access to health care services many rural veterans deserve but would otherwise be unable to obtain."

The legislation now goes to the Senate for consideration. Moran is a senior member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee where he serves on the Subcommittee on Health. Since first coming to Congress, Moran has focused on improving care for veterans. He helped successfully pass legislation to increase the mileage reimbursement rate for veterans traveling to access health care and has worked to open outpatient care clinics in Hutchinson, Hays, Dodge City, Salina and Junction City.

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